

U.S. REPORTED SET TO JOIN IN RANSOM OF CUBA CAPTIVES

Washington Is Said to Play
a Main Role in Havana Talks
on Release of Prisoners

WHITE HOUSE IS SILENT

But Kennedy Gets Detailed
Reports on Negotiations—
Final Cost Still Uncertain

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By MAX FRANKEL

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WASHINGTON, Oct. 10—The Federal Government is understood to be prepared to help pay the ransom for 1,113 prisoners taken in last year's unsuccessful invasion of Cuba.

This came to light tonight after it was indicated that the Administration was playing a considerable though unacknowledged role in negotiations to ransom the men.

Officially, the White House, State Department, Justice Department and Central Intelligence Agency have all tried to give the impression that the negotiations with Premier Fidel Castro were being handled only by the Cuban Families Committee for the Liberation of Prisoners of War.

But these and perhaps other arms of the executive appear to have a deep interest in the proceedings, an interest that may even extend to considerable control over them.

[Informed quarters in New York said that the Havana discussions on liberating the invasion prisoners were in terms of \$11,000,000 to \$17,000,000 in cash, with the balance of the total price of \$62,000,000 to be made up in food, medicine, cattle vaccine and clothing.]

Some members of Congress have been objecting to any use of Government money in the ransom fund. Senators John J. Williams, Republican of Delaware, and John Stennis, Democrat of Mississippi, said on the Senate floor that they were opposed to any Federal payment.

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Senator Williams said he could not believe that the Government was involved in the negotiations or that it would "put up any substantial amount of ransom."

How much a contribution the Federal Government will make remains uncertain. One report tonight was that it would be about \$13,000,000 in medicine and foods. However, the final figure apparently depends on how much is raised in private and corporate contributions.

Negotiations Continuing

President Kennedy is known to feel a measure of responsibility for the men seized in the invasion in April, 1961. His Administration had sanctioned and assisted the attempt by Cuban refugees to retake the island from the Castro Government.

The White House has refused to comment on persistent reports that Mr. Kennedy had approved or abetted the negotiations that are now going on in Havana. At the least, however, the President is said to be getting detailed reports on their progress.

The indications are that the briefings have been supplied by

his brother, Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy. The Justice Department also has refused comment, except to deny that the Attorney General inspired the negotiations and turned them over to James B. Donovan, the New York attorney who has been representing the Cuban Families Committee in Meetings with Dr. Castro in Havana this week.

It is known, however, that Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Donovan have conferred here several times recently. Mr. Donovan is the Democratic candidate for Senator in New York.

State Department officials also have described the negotiations as a "private" affair. But it is known that several Latin American specialists from the department have advised the Cuban Families Committee both here and in Miami and perhaps directed some of its efforts.

Additional Funds Needed

Some members of Congress have been kept informed of the progress of the negotiations by the Administration, possibly because Government payments have to be used to supplement private and corporate contributions to the fund raised for obtaining the captives' freedom.

Premier Castro was believed to have set a price of about \$60,000,000 for the release of the prisoners. One report here was that this could be delivered in food and medicines whose value would be determined by current Cuban market prices.

The Cuban families were said to have obtained the cooperation of United States suppliers who would furnish the ransom goods at little more than cost. This might reduce the committee's actual expenditure to about \$40,000,000.

The reasons for the Administration's reluctance to admit a

role in the negotiations have not been made clear. It may be because the United States has had no diplomatic relations with Cuba since January, 1961. In addition, Washington may have wished to emphasize the humanitarian purpose of the negotiations and to deny Havana an opportunity of exacting a political or higher financial price for the prisoners.

Use of U. S. Funds Opposed

WASHINGTON, Oct. 10 (AP) — Senator John J. Williams, Republican of Delaware and Senator John Stennis, Democrat of Mississippi, said today they were opposed to the Government's paying any ransom for the release of prisoners taken in the invasion of Cuba.

Donovan Meets With Castro

HAVANA, Oct. 10 (UPI) — James B. Donovan met with Premier Castro today in what may be the final step in negotiations for the release of 1,113 Cuban invasion prisoners.

The meeting began in the Presidential Palace here shortly after 4 P.M., informed sources said. No details were immediately available, but sources said Mr. Donovan was accompanied to the meeting by Mrs. Berta Barreto, liaison representative of the Cuban Families Committee.

Dr. Castro, in a bitter attack on the United States last night, made no mention of the negotiations. He charged that the United States was preparing an invasion of Cuba.

Earlier today, in a telephone talk with his New York office, Mr. Donovan said he was "highly optimistic" that the release of the prisoners would be carried out.